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\$11,000 Voted For Town Hall Study

Town Meeting voters appropriated \$11,000 for the continued preparation of plans for the renovation of the Town Hall last Saturday after a two hour debate. A motion to indefinitely postpone the article was defeated.

Daniel Cotton, chairman of the committee to study space needs for town offices, introduced the article. He explained that the request for an appropriation for more plans had been reduced to \$11,000 from \$30,000 as "a prudent

Saturday T.M.

way to go and will provide an intermediate stop for approval."

The plans submitted so far, Cotton said, give a general idea of the plans, drawn up by Sweeney and Donham Architects, to renovate the present Town Hall. "They are not cast in stone," Cotton said of the plans which have met with controversy over the past several months.

"To establish a building that is safe and convenient to the town's people, these are our goals. There is no need for an additional town building," Cotton said. He noted the sturdiness of the Town Hall and how the town would be hard pressed to afford as well build a structure today. "It's not a fire trap, it's not worn out," he added.

Architect Brett Donham explained that the plans for the building allows for 20 years growth, according to MAPC population projections, by reducing the auditorium by 40 per cent, and enlarging and rearranging the offices both upstairs and downstairs.

The Advisory Committee and the Capital Budget Committee both commended the study committee for its thorough approach. The Advisory Committee unanimously supported the article and felt that the process should go on but emphasized also the need for more detailed plans. The Capital Budget Committee was less enthusiastic about the renovation, indicating its split decision that action should be delayed.

Selectman Arthur Clark, who voiced the strongest objections to the plan both personally and for his board, said he was in an embarrassing position as he had assisted in appointing members to the study committee.

"We're still stuck with the old high ceilings, the old heating system, and old windows that open outward," Clark said. His other objections included the lack of housing for town employees while renovation was under-

way, the placement of offices downstairs, and the inadequately sized and fireproofed vaults.

"They (the study committee) got the Town Hall partially preserved to get around the Building Code," Clark further charged, reminding the crowd of the local building inspector's final say in the enforcing of the Code.

Cotton and Donham responded to Clark's comments. Cotton said the committee decided early to insulate the building, and that without proper insulation the heating system would be impossible to be balanced. "The windows are in need of repair — no question," he agreed.

"We're not trying to dodge the Building Code," Donham continued. He said that a recent vault inspection carried out by the Secretary of State's office indicated that if all four vaults were brought up to state standard, the Town Hall will have more than adequate space.

Clark spoke against the vault situation again, and asked Building Inspector Litchfield to consider the committee's plan to have an elevator going to the basement for access to records, and whether there was enough room to grant an occupancy permit (for head room) there.

Litchfield answered, "No, there is not."

Town Accountant, William Signorrelli, said that if the renovation plan for \$337,000 were financed over 10 years at 5.5 per cent, the total cost would be \$461,650.

The article passed with a majority by voice vote.

3A BUILDING

A related article — Article 16, to purchase the Route 3A professional building for \$325,000 for use as town office space — was defeated with 294 voters opposed, 27 in favor.

Alfred Odermatt, introduced the citizens petition article, noting the building's benefits: possible rental income to help defray maintenance cost, location next to two shopping centers, and immediate occupancy (not considering renovations).

Odermatt also noted that the present Town Hall would remain as it is and could serve the town's organizations. He also suggested that the upper floor be closed to reduce maintenance costs.

The Advisory Board spoke against the article, finding the location, general renovation and maintenance costs unsuitable. The Capital Budget Committee found the proposal unnecessary and of doubtful benefit.

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